



# Yoni's Global Sukkah Placemat and Conversation Starter

## Always laugh when someone makes a joke – by Sharon Radley

### #YonisGlobalSukkah



Always laugh when someone makes a joke.

When I read Yoni's aphorisms what first struck me was how he took big concepts that we all grapple with on a day-to-day basis and made them relevant to the individual. Yoni wrote; 'Always laugh when someone makes a joke'. Whilst this may at first glance refer to a requirement to be polite, I believe he was referring to something much greater; never allowing others to feel embarrassed.

One of my favourite stories is about the Eighteenth Century Sage, Rabbi Akiva Eiger who was renowned for his hospitality. During one Passover Seder while Rabbi Eiger and his guests were seated at the table speaking of the Exodus from Egypt one of his guests accidentally tipped over his glass and spilled wine all over the clean white tablecloth. Everyone at the table stared in horror, first at the dark red stain and then at the man who had spilled his wine. So as to save his guest any embarrassment, Rabbi Eiger caused his own wine glass to spill over. "I'm so sorry," he said. "This table is uneven, I forgot to warn you. There is often a problem with things spilling." The Rabbi then continued with the Seder. The guest no longer felt embarrassed and greatly enjoyed the rest of the Seder.

This powerfully teaches us the extent to which we should try to go so as not to embarrass another. Every moment we use our speech we can either humiliate or speak kindly to another, and following what Yoni said, this is a choice. Next time we may be about to embarrass someone, remember that we have the same ability to build that person up to feel great about themselves.

#### Questions:

Have you ever been embarrassed publicly? How did you feel? How did you handle the situation?  
Have you ever embarrassed someone else publicly? How did they react?  
Do you think Rabbi Eiger went too far in order to save his guest from embarrassment? If so, why?  
How far must we go to ensure we protect others from embarrassment?  
Do you think it's ok to tell a white lie in order to protect someone's dignity?  
Why do you think a person may find it easier to humiliate someone than to validate them?



**Sharon Radley** is the Head of Education at Tribe – The Young People's Department of the United Synagogue. Sharon has spent over twenty years teaching Secular and Jewish Studies in Primary and Secondary schools in the UK and Israel. Sharon joined The United Synagogue five years ago and is now Head of Education at Tribe.

Connection to Yoni: I didn't have the privilege to meet Yoni but have been inspired by hearing about him from his cousins and my colleagues who were Yoni's close friends. This summer our Youth Leaders at Tribe's summer camps had the honour of listening to moving words from Yoni's mother and to take part in the Yoni Jesner Community Award.